

The Renewing Power of Resilience

If you ask people what *resilience* means to them, many will reply it means *bouncing back* to a former self or regaining something we lost. There is some truth to this bouncing back idea because we do regain and restore. But after successfully going through pain and adversity, we discover the experience also renewed or changed us in some fundamental way. We came out of it as Hemmingway wrote "stronger at the broken places." And as Eric Greitens, author of Resilience, points out, "If we limit our understanding of resilience to [just] this idea of bouncing back, we miss much of what hardship, pain, and suffering offer us. We also misunderstand our basic human capacity to change and improve." So keeping all of this and much more in mind, our definition for resilience is as follows:

Resilience is the ability to bounce back, recover, and develop a stronger capacity to respond to adversities in the future.

Resilience, however, is much more about springing forward to something greater than we were before! This inner wellspring of power we call resilience is a synergistic miracle of faith, love, positivity, and the human spirit.¹

Our expedition to resilience does not diminish our important journey through recovery; it actually builds upon and enriches it. Recovery is the process of moving from the mental illness, addiction, disease, and/or trauma, while resilience is about what we're moving toward. Recovery is a path for many, but resilience is a potential journey for all of us, taking us deeper, further, and even higher into the realm of wellness.



Care for the Caregivers

People who care for others, whether it's caring for family members or people served at work, draw from their own mental, emotional, physical and spiritual energy reserves. Like any resource, if we don't refill it, then we won't have enough to restore, recharge, and renew ourselves. As the old saying goes... "If we pour ourselves out all day long and put nothing back in, we'll have little left to give."

Having strong, positive connections to others is a vital part of health and wellbeing. One study which examined data from more than 300,000 people, found that a lack of strong, positive relationships increased the risk of premature death from all causes by 50 percent. Research also revealed that making positive connections with others helps relieve harmful levels of stress, which can adversely affect coronary arteries, intestinal function, insulin regulation, and the immune system. All of this is encouraging because it turns out caregivers can also benefit from care they get for themselves.

When our positive relationships are characterized by any of the five steps of resilience, they have an overall effect of strengthening our own resilience. For example, making strong connections with people who increase our optimism, bolster our courage, intensify our sense of belonging, enhance our community connections, and/or deepen our spirituality will ultimately help build up our resilient reserves. We find a way to pour back into ourselves what we so freely pour out to others. And in the reciprocal process of getting back and giving back, ~~while~~ broadened and enriched our lives along the way.